

# JUSTICE DONE, AND SEEN TO BE DONE

## John 19:6.

### (Sermon Summary)

#### Reading: John 19.

There is a seeming injustice in Pilate saying that he finds no fault in the Lord Jesus but then authorising the Jews to take Him away and crucify Him. There is actually a failure in both the Jewish and Roman justice systems. Yet there is a greater justice system which makes perfect sense of what we are seeing happen here. This is God's perfect justice which is upheld and maintained. In this, despite all the failure of the human justice systems on display, we should rejoice and be glad. For this ensures our salvation.

#### 1. Human justice failed.

When we follow the trial process our Saviour endured, we can see that justice was certainly not done, nor seen to be done. The Bible invites us to come to the conclusion that the corrupted trial processes here sentence an innocent man to death.

The Jewish system had failed before the Lord ever appeared before Pilate. We can see where things are heading from the earlier words of Caiaphas (John 11:49-52). The Jewish leaders were not interested in seeing justice done but in securing the death of the Lord (Luke 22:1-2). The purposes of justice were thwarted in that the trial was held at night which is very irregular. A death sentence was passed which would usually have required more careful deliberation rather than be rushed through (Matthew 26:65-67). That those leading the proceedings actually sought out false testimony (Matthew 26:59-61) shows how corrupted the process was. That the false testimony fell apart (Mark 14:55-59) meant the case should have finished there and then. Our Lord had no proper opportunity to call His own witnesses in His defence. And there was no effort to inquire more closely into the words that He did say (Mark 14 61-63).

The Roman system also failed to deliver justice. This process took precedence over the Jewish one in that it was the only one able to carry out the death sentence. The Jewish court was powerless to effect its decision that the Lord was worthy of death. So the Jewish leaders had to manipulate the Roman system to get what they wanted out of it. It was in Pilate's power to have the Lord put to death (John 19:10) while the Jews were powerless to carry out their desire (John 18: 31-32). So they had to convince Pilate that the Lord posed a threat to the authority of Rome to get them to act. Yet they were unable to persuade Pilate (John 18:38; John 19:6; Luke 23: 4, 14, 15-22; Matthew 27:

24). He could find no fault in Him and was minded to release Him (Acts 3:13). Yet Pilate was still willing to chastise the Lord despite knowing He had done nothing wrong. And then He was prepared that the Jews should take over his authority and take the Lord away to be crucified, again, knowing that He had done no wrong. Pilate knew what lay behind the chief priests' malicious case against the Lord and that it was envy that was motivating them (Matthew 27:18). He himself had found no evidence to back up the claims that the Lord was a threat to the peace and, instead, was beginning to see that the claims to the Lord's title as King of the Jews had credibility.

But Pilate was manipulated by the fear of being seen to have failed to uphold the peace in the city and allowing a potential rival to Caesar to go unpunished (John 19:12; and Matthew 27: 20,24). It would not have looked good if a riot had ensued in the city on his watch. Then the crowd had an intimidating effect when they all called out for the Lord to be crucified (Luke 23:22-29). So those who should have been upholders of justice failed in their duty. Instead, we have an object lesson in deceit, murder, and manipulation.

## **2. God's justice prevailed.**

Scripture is clear that this was the death of someone just for those who are unjust (1 Peter 3:18). In our Lord being taken to His death, although human justice had failed abysmally here, God's perfect justice was carried out to the letter. God is the lawgiver and is the only Being able to objectively know its worth. He alone can assess the damage disobedience is to His own glory and can determine the proper and proportionate punishment. He can assess the damage of sin, its violence, its evil, its horror. The proper penalty for breaking His laws is death for our scorning of His love, wisdom, holiness and justice. We inherit the opposite of His blessing, forfeiting His comforts in everlasting punishment, where all we meet with is His justice. We experience loneliness, need, sadness, disappointment and pain. When we defy God, we lose His favour and face His stern justice.

But our situation changes if someone can be found who has not sinned and who willingly dies in the place of the guilty. Moreover, if that Person has a glory of His own, He could meet the affront done to divine justice and answer it. In the end, it was not the injustice of men that killed the Lord, but it was the verdict of God's justice on our sin. If we were to have hope of forgiveness, someone had to settle our debt. This is what the Lord Jesus does for His people.

## **3. Love made it happen.**

Justice alone had no answer to our plight. God is just. But God is also loving. He has compassion on rebels and lawbreakers. God in His love of justice, and His love for sinners, yielded up His Son to die. What our Lord suffered physically through His trial, and then on the cross itself, was an outward sign of a deeper inner pain. Our Lord was

experiencing the wrath of God. He was abandoned, thirsted, longed for relief, empty and in darkness. He was torn apart inside as the guilt for our sin became His to carry. He stayed the course as He remembered the people He was doing this for, in obedience to His Father's will.

Here then was a wonder. The God-man was able to die for His people, not in His divine nature, but as the Word incarnate. The mystery of the 'immortal dying' is held together by the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, both God and man.

Sin has to be punished and will either be punished in our Lord or in us. Those are the only choices and options open. We can see our sin laid on Him and realize that it can be forgiven. We do not need to have endure this death ourselves and God does not require it from Christ's hand and then from ours.

Reading the account for the trial is harrowing. We see manifest injustice. But it is the way to the satisfying of God's perfect justice. It is a unique and special moment in the history of the world.